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THE GREAT
D U T Y
OF
CONTENTMENT,
AND
RESIGNATION
TO THE
WILL of GOD,
RECOMMENDED:

Shewing the Ways and Means how to attain such a
Temper of Mind as will make us happy in the
worst Circumstances we may possibly fall into.

BEING

The Substance of Five SERMONS Preached first at
Hoxton Chapel, and afterwards in the Parish Church of
St. MARGARET'S, *Lothbury*.

To which are added,

Select Forms of PRAYERS proper for private Families, and
particular Persons, extracted from the Liturgy of the Church
of *England*, and other Books of Devotion.

*In this Edition are inserted some Observations on the Use and Abuse of
the Passions; with several Remarks on particular Parts of the
Discourse, not inserted in the former Impressions.*

By the Reverend Mr. ^{Thomas} SMITH, *K*
Preacher of the Sunday Morning, and Thursday Afternoon Lec-
tures, in the Parish Church of St. GILES, *Cripplegate*.

The FIFTH EDITION, corrected by the AUTHOR, with con-
siderable Additions.

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P R E F A C E.

I DO not publish these plain Discourses, as if I thought them to excel, or even so much as equal those, which have already been published on the same subject. On the contrary, I always looked upon them in such an inferior light, that I could not be prevailed on, (though often assured by my Friends, who heard them from the pulpit, that they were well approved of, and greatly desired to be made public) till I had shewn them to a Reverend Person, who, in the opinion of judicious men, is a man of great probity, and undissembled piety, good sense, and true learning, and on whose judgment I entirely relied.

This worthy person, after he had with great attention, heard them read, affirmed, that the matter contained in them was good; and, if communicated to the world, might, through the Divine Blessing, be not only a means to promote the present interest and truest happiness of mankind, but also their future glory and final felicity.

How far they may answer these immensely great and invaluable ends, I cannot pretend to say; but it shall be my earnest request to the Fountain of Life, that they may have this good effect on the hearts of all that read them, and likewise, that they may be instrumental in establishing real goodness, instead of the appearance

of it; and fixing in the mind the power of Godliness, instead of the form thereof.

When the minds of men are thus happily influenced, they will not lay hold of a few visionary notions, or rest satisfied with an imaginary scheme of things, which may serve to fill the head, but can never reform the heart: for true religion terminates in action, in transcribing the great original of Purity, in our lives, and conversations. And the kingdom of God consists not in the observance of external rites, or superficial performances, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He that does these things so, serves Christ, that he is both acceptable to God, and profitable to men.

Real religion is seated in the heart, is discovered by a regular and circumspect behaviour, and a constant conformity to all the precepts of the gospel; this brings men to hearken to the moving voice of undefiled reason, and to obey the unerring dictates thereof, till, by degrees, they are so charmed with this heavenly principle, and so delighted with the practice of virtue, that they can find no true felicity but in the discharge of those immutable laws of justice and equity, and the use of such means as act in conjunction with our rational faculties, and are designed to advance us in real piety and goodness. For holiness is the beauty of the soul, the highest prerogative of reasonable beings. It is the perfection of the Deity, the employment of angels, and will be the exercise of glorified spirits, during the several stages of their eternal existence.

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*Unless men feel the force of truth in subduing the turbulent motions of the sensitive appetites, and restraining their vicious affections, they will never be able to master those unruly * passions, nor get the victory over their inordinate lusts, which are always ready to disquiet and enslave them. The neglecting to conquer the evil desires of the mind, will keep the soul in a state of spiritual bondage; obstruct its endeavours after true liberty, and hinder us from entering into his service which is perfect freedom.*

Let these considerations be motives to remove every impediment out of the way that may hinder us from discharging our duty faithfully; for then we shall neither feel much interruption from within, nor meet with much opposition from without; but our souls will be animated with courage, and inspired with activity, and we shall be able to go on in the paths of virtue, with cheerfulness and delight: by means of which our senses will be exercised on the great end and ultimate design of all our actions, which is the glory of God, and the happiness of men.

Moreover, we shall be brought to acknowledge, that the original source of all things is God: that we owe our very being to his almighty power, and our subsistence to his good providence: that we are the work of his hands, and our preservation must be ascribed to his diffusive goodness, and overflowing beneficence: that we
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* I would not have it thought, that the passions are sinful in themselves, but they become so when illegally gratified; neither should we aim at reducing them to such a state of inactivity, as to obstruct their operating regularly and justly; for used they may be, but abused they must not be.

are frail sinful creatures, whose dependance is entirely upon him, for whatsoever we enjoy in this life, or hope for in the next. Therefore universal submission and obedience is due to him as the source and origin of all, and we must glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are his.

The firm belief of a just and wise providence that governs the world, joined with a suitable behaviour, cannot fail of influencing our lives in so powerful a manner, as to preserve a calm and humble disposition of spirit before God; and make us capable of maintaining a serene and equal temper of mind throughout our deportment towards men. This faith will not only make us patiently submit to the divine pleasure, but also create joy, when in and under the sharpest tribulation.

*To whomsoever these discourses shall be thus blessed, they will feel the efficacy of true religion on their hearts, and they will be brought to have such a delight in the practice of * holiness, that their minds will be daily improving in moral endowments, and their souls will be purified and gradually prepared for a dwelling among saints and angels, in the bright regions of glory and never-fading pleasures.*

This, Reader, is the hearty prayer of him, who earnestly desires thy deliverance from the ruling power of sin, that thou mayest be free to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

* When I speak of Holiness, I do not mean a bare compliance with the external part of religion, but a real conformity to the moral perfections of God, as far as creatures are capable of imitating their Creator; for, without the exercise of goodness, we shall never obtain that serenity of mind, which pleases upon every review and reflection.

things. Then shall we walk conformable to the injunctions of that unchangeable law, which is, in all respects, adapted to the nature of every individual, and so suited to the various circumstances of each, that whosoever shall persevere in a diligent performance of its precept, shall meet with the divine approbation here, be inrolled in the book of life, and have his name recorded in the annals of futurity. If we are thus successful in our petitions to heaven, we shall commence citizens of a kingdom, where unmixed pleasures never cease, and unmingled felicity knows no period; the comfortable assurance of which, will wonderfully support our fainting spirits, when we are about to leave this gloomy seat, will greatly revive us at the time we are putting off this timent of clay; for then we shall exchange this known valley of tears, for the peaceable regions of joy. Thus happily removed we shall be fixed in mansions of everlasting rest, where immortal spirits are cloathed with the bright robes of spotless purity, and encircled with the resplendent rays of eternal glory, through the all-atoning blood of our crucified Saviour and Redeemer.

May that incomprehensible Being, which fills heaven and earth with his presence, fill our hearts with his love, and cause in us an utter abhorrence of all sin; work in us an admiration of the excellency of his moral government, and make us so to delight in practising the laws thereof, that, in consequence of such a conduct, we may, with the divine assistance, be able to hold up our heads with joy; and though, for the present,

*present, we are oppressed with straits and darkness, yet * let us wait with humble patience on him, who is good beyond our conceptions, till we arrive at the kingdom of light, where the secrets of providence shall be unfolded to our then more enlarged capacities; and the wonders of redeeming mercy justly displayed, in fixing us in a state of eternal felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

* Divine truth is much better understood when it unfolds itself in the purity of men's hearts and lives, than in all those subtle niceties in which curious wits have set it forth; and therefore our Saviour was not so careful to stock the world with notions, as to enrich it with true piety, and a God-like pattern of purity. His main scope was to promote a holy life as the best expedient and most commodious way to a right belief. He makes all true acquaintance with God to depend upon the doing of God's will; *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* This matter is well argued by that truly pious and learned divine, Mr. J. Smith. See his *select Discourses*, p. 9.

Diogenes was angry with criticks that were more nice of their words, than they were of their actions; with musicians that tune their instruments, but could not govern their passions; with astrologers that have their eyes in the sky, and look not to their goings; with orators that study to speak well, but not to act well; with covetous men that take care to get, but never to use their estates. He lighted a candle at noon, saying, I look for a man, implying, that the world was darkened by vice and wickedness, and men were ruined by luxury and effeminacy.

THE GREAT
D U T Y
OF
CONTENTMENT
RECOMMENDED, &c.

PHILL. iv. 12.

*I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith
to be content.*

CONTENTMENT, in every circumstance of life, is a hard lesson, and a great while in learning; for it not only requires a composed temper of mind in our present condition, but there must be such a disposition within, as will incline the soul, with patience, freely to submit, to whatsoever may befall us, in the course of God's providence for the future; in affliction or want, in distress or persecution, under the most pressing evils, as well as the greatest good. In a word, hard as this lesson is, and difficult as it appears, yet it must be learned, before we can have any tolerable comfort in this life, or inclination to prepare for the next. So long as our affections are unruly, and our minds restless and uneasy, we are unfit to approach the throne of grace, and unqualified to appear before the awful presence of God, in the calm and peaceable regions of glory and blessedness.

Let us then remove every obstruction out of the way, that may hinder us from learning this

important lesson, and suffer neither murmuring nor repining to invade our Breasts; lest these bitter enemies of our peace should get the advantage of our weakness, and finally destroy us. Would we have our endeavours successful, and be able to vanquish such disquieting adversaries, let us go to the mercy-seat, and earnestly implore the aids of God's grace and holy Spirit, that we may have strength to subdue them, and power to silence their clamorous importunities. For whenever we obtain the divine assistance, and are comforted with the energy of divine consolation, we shall be so intent upon learning this lesson, that it will inspire us with courage to keep on in it, till our hearts can speak the apostle's language, and we can truly say, *We have learned in whatsoever state we are, to be therewith content. For I know, says he, how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ, who strengthneth me:* that is, he could not only learn that lesson, but that, or any other, which God should require of him, through the assistance of Christ, by whom alone he had been enabled to learn that mentioned in the text, *in whatsoever state he was, to be therewith content.* I shall now, with the divine assistance, begin to give a more particular account of this lesson of contentment; and for the doing of which I shall take the following method.

1. I shew what contentment is. 2. By what means it may be attained. 3. Lay before you the happiness of him that is possessed of it. And lastly, make such observations on the advantages which accrue to us, by learning this important lesson, as naturally tend to quicken our endeavours
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vours after it, and encourage us with chearfulness and alacrity to persevere in it.

1. I propose to shew what contentment is.

Contentment is not only an equal temper of mind in our present condition, but it is also a submissive disposition of soul, and a readiness to bear with patience and humility, resignation and chearfulness, whatever state or condition God in his providence shall place us in for the future. A disposition thus resigned, will free the mind of all inward resentment, and keep it from making any dishonourable reflections on the Deity. Let then the humble man's station in life, be ever so disagreeable or ungrateful, he will vindicate the divine proceedings, and never pretend to arraign his administration, who deals most justly by his creatures, and always acts without prejudice, and partiality in their favour.

He that has such a virtuous turn of mind, will be content under every dispensation of providence; will own God's goodness, and acknowledge his justice, in adversity as well as prosperity. Should he be deprived of what he wants, and lose what he has, he will commit himself and his affairs to the will of the Almighty, whose goodness he is assured of, and whose truth and veracity he does not doubt of. Should he suffer in his person, estate, or good name, it is no more than what he expects, and therefore patiently bears it, and rests content with it. Should he be reduced from the highest pitch of affluence, to the lowest situation in life, or suffer by designing men, who lie in wait to deceive him, he will make no other reflection than this, *that the Lord gave, and that the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*; or, with good old Eli, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

Again, should he be afflicted with any great calamity, and treated with disdain, he will not be discomposed; or meet with contempt, he will not be provoked. Should enemies insult him, and friends forsake him, or pains and diseases violently seize him, and instead of being comforted and assisted, he should be upbraided and ridiculed, he will not reproach the justice of providence, but while oppressed with this load of sorrow, and under all those dark and gloomy circumstances, he will patiently submit to the divine reprovcr, and to the discipline and correction of his heavenly Father.

Moreover, if among his adversaries, there is one who has the greatest interest in his afflictions, and ought to throw a veil over his infirmities, should prove guilty of the vilest treachery and basest falsehood towards him; all other afflictions but this last mentioned, comparatively speaking, touch but his body, but this wounds his very soul; still he can bear himself up with such a steady and humble temper of mind, as not to deviate from the laws of reason, but will, with the divine help, be found in the constant practice of his duty, and so resigned to the will of God, with humility and dependance, as truly to say with *Job*, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; he also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before him*, *Job* xiii. 15, 16.

There is not any thing shall make him cast off his hope and confidence in God, being well assured, that all shall be made up to him again, either here or hereafter. This the royal *Psalmist* has fully assured us of, *Psalms* the xxvii. 15. *For I had fainted, says he, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.* In all afflictions the truly pious soul will
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look up to his God, and patiently wait the issue of his providence, from the consideration of the manifold mercies he has already received, and the many evils, which he must have suffered, if the kind Parent of the universe, the indulgent Father of spirits, had not interposed for his preservation. Meditations of this sort will greatly revive his dejected mind, and wonderfully support his sinking spirit; and therefore, in the times of the greatest distress, he will reason as *Job* did, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not receive evil?*

In a word, whatever troubles or afflictions befall the good man in this life, sensible he is, that sin is the original cause of all, and that *afflictions spring not out of the dust*, but are ordered by the wise disposer of all things, to cure the wounds that sin has made, and to work that for him, which he could not do himself, by reason of the weakness and depravity of his nature. Which things, joined with the many advantages he receives from afflictions, when they have their proper influence upon him: as the mortification of his lust, the restraining of his passions, which before he had indulged, and making them act in due subordination to his reason; also the gaining a knowledge of himself, as far as he is able, and getting the victory over his inordinate desires and sinful affections, is a much nobler conquest than was ever gained by the mightiest monarch, or the greatest hero. For the conquest which they made was only a temporal one, and the advantage they gained, was but some little spot of earth, which they added to that they were before possessed of, or some title of honour; both which could continue no longer at farthest, than this frail and perishable life.

But to the patient and contented man, afflictions are of infinitely greater advantage. They take his
mind

mind off from earthly things, and fix it more steadfastly on heavenly things; this gives him that solid peace, satisfaction and comfort, which the world, with all its gay and glittering pomp, cannot afford him. The regulating his passions, he esteems one of the best means to bring him to an acquaintance with his Maker, and the gaining him an inheritance in that kingdom, which cannot decay with time, but will endure throughout the numberless ages of eternity. So that here is matter of joy and comfort to him, but no just cause for either discontent or impatience.

Every truly humble soul is under the protection of God Almighty, who will preserve him from all evil, and from every thing that may be prejudicial to his spiritual and eternal good, and therefore he looks upon the sufferings of this present life, as not worthy to be compared with that glory which shall be revealed in him, and that afflictions are but light things, *i. e.* light when compared with that everlasting happiness they are means to procure: and though for the present, they are grievous, they are but for a moment, and will work out for him an eternal weight of glory: *for as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, so neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

A good man has such a sense of the Deity's kindness, and his superintendent goodness, as will cause him gratefully to acknowledge that his constant preservation is wholly to be ascribed to the power and benignity of the Almighty. This makes him secretly adore the divine munificence, for the provision which he has so liberally made for, and so generously bestowed upon him, that he cannot entertain any hard thoughts of providence, nor harbour in his breast any unworthy notions of the Divine justice. The remembrance of
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God's former dealings with him, in delivering him out of numberless dangers and evils, which he could neither foresee, nor prevent, will afford his mind inexpressible satisfaction, and cause him to justify the proceedings of Providence and the conduct of that Being, who weighs our spirits in a balance, and orders all things with the most consummate power and wisdom, and impartial distribution.

Likewise, the many present blessings that he enjoys, joined with the hopes of possessing the glories of futurity, and all those undeserved favours, which he could neither expect, nor claim any right to, but as the free gift of heaven, and the effects of that love, which this infinite, all-wise and good Being, bears to him and all his creatures, will support him under the severest trials, and carry him through, the heaviest of all God's dispensations, with a degree of cheerfulness and comfort.

These things the humble and devout mind meditates on, and looks up with joy to the transcendent majesty of God, who is a Being of infinite goodness, as well as power; and in whom all perfections shine in their brightest and undiminished lustre; a Being from whom he receives all he has, and all that he can have; a Being, which if he is careful to imitate in all his moral perfections, as far as his nature is capable, and copy after the divine original according to his measure, he is assured that God will not do any thing that has a tendency to make him, or any of his creatures, miserable.

Let us endeavour to persevere in well-doing, and see that all our actions are agreeable to, and consistent with those unchangeable laws of righteousness God has written in our hearts, and our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed in his * word. So that

* The invariable laws of nature are no where so clearly expressed and exhibited, or the observation of them so positively enjoined

that whatsoever evils happen to us in this life, if rightly applied, they will be a means to forward our present peace, and to prepare our souls for a much better and more durable state hereafter. By proper reflections on the advantages of afflictions, and the benevolent purposes of the divine nature, and all its awful and adorable excellencies and perfections, it will be impossible to discern, that any thing is done, or can be done, by so lovely a Being as God is, who is full of goodness, and every thing that is amiable and delightful, but what tends to perfect our happiness, and to secure our present and future felicity. Would but men impartially enquire, and strictly examine their own ways, they would soon be convinced, that the calamities of this life, are justly inflicted upon them, for their iniquities, and therefore, they have no reason to murmur against providence, or to complain of the Divine severity.

The chastisements of our heavenly Father are wisely calculated to restrain us from the commission of vice, and to improve us in the exercise of virtue, that we may be delighted with the beauty of real goodness, and charmed with the excellency of the Christian morality. Afflictions are not intended by God, merely to torment and vex us, he has no ends to serve, by making us miserable. God is infinitely happy in himself, and our disquietude

enjoined or commanded as in the gospel revelation, so that intelligent beings cannot plead ignorance of their duty, or offer any arguments sufficient, for the wilful omission of it under the Christian dispensation. All the paths of piety and virtue are so plainly described and delineated, that no man can possibly miss his way, who sincerely enquires after it. For as a judicious divine observes, " Though in matters of opinion, men may be innocently misled and deceived, yet there is no article, either of doctrine or duty, upon which our happiness necessarily depends, wherein it is possible for an honest and sincere mind to be mistaken." *Dr. Scot, vol. II. p. 37.*

quietude will not add to his blessedness, or make his power and greatness more illustrious. His glory consists in our felicity, and in bringing us to the possession of it. Nay, we are assured by the word of truth, that God has the most compassionate regard for us, that he delights to do us good, and is not willing to afflict or grieve the children of men; but corrects us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, and in the end acquire eternal life and happiness. Afflictions preserve in our minds such an awful sense of Divine goodness, as makes every truly good man really sensible, that he is but a poor dependant being, intirely under the conduct, and wholly under the care of an infinitely superior one: one that knows his frame, and remembers that he is but dust; and therefore, will not forsake the work of his hands, but watch over him for good, and will not omit any means that may advance or further it.

The truly contented mind is perfectly satisfied, that the God of consolation has not been wanting in giving sufficient proof of his love to mankind, and that he really designs to make us everlastingly happy, in sending his own Son to die for us, and to accept of his death as a sacrifice and satisfaction for our past transgressions; so that every true believer in Christ Jesus may justly take up the apostle's reasoning, and say, *He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* that is, let us now doubt, if we can, of his kind intentions toward us, since he hath not withheld his own Son, but delivered him up to death for our sakes; a mercy so great in itself, and the effects of it so boundless and stupendous, that angels cannot comprehend the fulness of it.

We can have no reason to question his goodness, who has been so infinitely gracious, as to give us
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his beloved Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. We cannot reasonably suppose, that God will deny us any thing, that is necessary to our true happiness, nor bestow any thing upon us, but what will incline us to seek after it, and be a means to prepare our souls for a blessed immortality, in the bright and glorious realms of futurity. And though it must be owned, that many virtuous heathens have endured very great sufferings with wonderful fortitude and courage; yet none have ever borne them with such patience and resignation, as the disciples of the meek and holy Jesus; nor have any but they, such a real and solid foundation for comfort and satisfaction. For they have the most convincing light, and the clearest evidence, as well as the greatest reason to believe, that the same Jesus who died for their sins, is also risen again for their justification, and is now seated at the right hand of God's glorious majesty, making intercession for all his faithful servants, that where he is, there they may be also. These sublime contemplations on the divine benignity, will raise their souls above all inferior considerations, and possess their minds with so deep a sense of God's love, that they will not pretend to arraign his providence, nor to make the least unbecoming reflections on his justice, or on any of his other attributes. And although their condition may be very perplexing, and their state so very calamitous, as to make them afraid, and they may have such a passionate sense of their sufferings, as may cause them to break out into that moving language, which afflicted nature teaches; yet they will not impeach the equity of providence, nor attempt to lessen his goodness who has often turned their greatest evils into good, and made their most grievous afflictions a means of conveying to them the best of blessings.

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This is that which silences all their clamours, and makes them to have such a profound veneration, for the wisdom of their Creator, that they will for ever admire it. This will cause them to adore his goodness, and to magnify his justice, in sending afflictions to correct their mistakes and daily failings; which otherwise they might have been too apt to pass by as not worth regarding. Therefore they are not uneasy at them, nor impatient under them, however they may thwart their natural inclinations or worldly advantages; they will neither murmur nor complain against God, but rest satisfied with every thing that God does, being well assured that whatever is done by so all-wise and good a being as God is, must be for the best. And for our farther comfort under the various troubles, and calamities which we meet with in this life, we may learn from God's own word, that nothing can befall us, but what is from the immediate hand of God, or by his permission; and that he will not send any thing to us, but what has a tendency to secure our happiness in this life, and to prevent our misery in the next, if we study to approve ourselves to him in righteousness and true holiness.

Considerations of this nature will make every good man's behaviour under trouble composed, his countenance serene, his mind so quiet and calm, that he will suffer no tumultuous passions to crowd in upon him, nor any disorders to interrupt the tranquility of his soul; always bears in mind the wise ends and designs of providence, and the kind intentions of his heavenly Father, in sending afflictions, which are designed to wean him from the love of this present evil world, and to take him off from placing his affections on any of its transitory enjoyments. By this means, the mind becomes fixed on more noble and lasting objects,

which will cause it fully to discover the emptiness and insufficiency of all things here below, for affording the soul any real satisfaction, and the utter impossibility of every thing that is of a mortal nature, to satisfy the large and capacious desires of that which is immortal. No, the whole circle of human pleasures will not alleviate the troubles of the mind, nor give one moment's ease to a soul in distress. Nothing but God, and communion with him, can give the soul that sound peace, satisfaction, and contentment, it is in the pursuit of.

The things of the world promise fair, but prove deceitful; they captivate us first with their charms, bring us to acquiesce with their bewitching insinuations, and cause us to yield to their unprofitable amusements. Our shameful compliance with these insatiable diversions, makes us so eager to pursue these drossy entertainments, and such wretched slaves to acquire them, that at length we grow weary of following the painful and disquieting chase, and then instead of affording us any assistance, they swiftly fly away, and leave us in the utmost perplexity. But God will not deceive us, he will abide by us, and we may rejoice in his holy comforts. God will give us every thing that is good for us, and fill the craving desires of our minds with substantial pleasure and solid satisfaction, which no created being can deprive us of. The mind of a truly contented man has his desires so suited to his condition, that no future contingencies will make him uneasy; for he has a never-failing spring of comfort that is peculiar to the righteous, and a pleasure which none but submissive souls ever enjoy. And though many good men may labour under great afflictions, yet this virtuous disposition of mind, will wonderfully take off their keenness, and greatly abate their smart. A good christian is so far from murmuring or repining under his affliction, that by
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seriously considering the usefulness of them, and the advantages, that he has gained by them, they will inflame his soul with devotion, and raise in his grateful mind, thanksgiving and praise to the father of mercies, for his kind visitation, and cause him with the devout Psalmist to confess, *That it was good for him to be afflicted, for by them he learned God's law.* Wait than my soul still upon God, for my expectations are only from him, and the Lord will sustain thee, he will comfort thee in every stage of life, and support thee in the agonizing sorrows of death. Afflictions are of so penetrating a nature, that they not only alarm our inward man, and awaken us out of the fatal lethargy of sin, but they also enter so deep into our hearts, and leave such holy impressions on our minds, as bring us to abhor the impure enjoyments of sense, and to delight in the sacred exercise of virtue, and the exalted strains of rational devotion: For by them our souls are purified from sin, and by the help of divine efficacious grace; and the direction of our never-failing friend, we are turned from the perilous paths of darkness, and put into the way which leads to the realms of light and blessedness, where murmuring nor discontent has ever entered, nor ever will enter. Although the soul mourns under the evil of sin, and the sense of God's heavy displeasure, yet it will rejoice under his fatherly care, and paternal correction. *I will look unto the Lord, says the Prophet, and rejoice, and joy in the God of my salvation.* Doubt not then of God's goodness, nor despair of his infinite mercy; if the Lord be our preserver, he will also be our comforter in the day of trial, and when bowed with the weight of our troubles, even then, his rod and his staff will support us; therefore let us be content to wait as strangers, till we come to our heavenly inheritance, where we shall rest from the labour of sin and sorrow, and dwell in the

the bosom of Christ for ever. Would we but make a proper use of our troubles, and not offer to expostulate with our Maker, but labour to subdue our mutinous powers within, and desire no more than what satisfies nature, there are but few troubles from without, that would much annoy or terrify us; but that divine guardian, who guided the Israelites through the (a) terrible wilderness, will be to us a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, will stand so near to us in our distresses, that when we are beset with dangers, and have experienced the insufficiency of human help, we shall be encouraged to hope in God, and from a sense of our own weakness, and of the divine power and goodness, constrained to cry out, *Help Lord, for vain is the help of man. Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded.* God's truth and goodness is unchangeable, he never leaves those that do not first leave him. Thus quietly waiting upon God, and walking in the sacred path of holiness, we shall taste the blessed fruit of righteousness, and be so influenced by the divine faithfulness, that however confused things may appear now, by reason of the shallowness of our understandings, and the narrowness of our finite capacities, we may be assured of the divine equity, and that all God's dealings, will appear most just and beautiful in their due season. Let us then steadfastly rely upon the divine veracity, and not trust to the slippery amusements of sense, but instantly abstract our thoughts and affections from the diversions and hurries of the world, and fit them for a communication and intercourse with God, and the peaceable spirits above. For in none but minds thus composed and even,
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* The congregation of *Israel*, says the learned *Ainsworth*, was shut in from the four parts of the world, before them was the sea, behind them followed the enemy, and on each side were wildernesses of fiery serpents, which did terribly bite and devour mankind. See his annotations on *Exod. xiv. 10.*

do the bright reflections of the deity shine, as in a calm and smooth river. This being the most desirable state on earth, and the best qualification for the kingdom of heaven, all possible means should be used, and every faculty devoutly employed, to acquire and preserve such a serene and steady disposition of soul, as neither the inward commotions of tumultuous passions, nor any outward violent assaults of fortune, can be able to disturb or discompose. Be our passage through life ever so boisterous, or our condition ever so severe, to a mind thus truly resigned to Almighty God, nothing we meet with in this region of sorrow, can wholly destroy this angelic temper of soul, or be any diminution to its real happiness, or hindrance to its final felicity. For such as are fed with that hidden manna, which our divine compassionate Saviour, has promised to all those that overcome the snares, and temptations of the world, are inwardly refreshed with the warm rays of divine grace, and supported with the spiritual aids of divine and heavenly consolation; and though they sow in tears, yet they shall reap in joy, and find an eternal rest, and safe retreat for their souls. The cultivating and improving such sublime dispositions, and contemplating on the greatness of God's mercies, will cause us to admire the displays of divine love, and so to confide in the divine care, as will not only make us satisfied with our present condition, but our minds will also be possessed with contentment, and enabled to bear with meekness, and the christian spirit of resignation, whatsoever adverse state God in his unerring wisdom, shall be pleased to assign us to, and fix us in for the future.

II. I am now, in the *Second* place, to shew, by what means we may obtain this happy temper of mind.

I. By

1. By repentance toward God, which is a hearty sorrow for our sins past, joined with such resolutions as will keep us from returning to our former iniquities, and keep us in the constant exercise of true goodness for the future. And by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; trusting in him for the pardon of our offences, and the strengthening us with the aids of his grace, that we may be enabled to withstand the temptations of the devil, and to repel whatsoever evils he may throw in our way, to prevent our reliance on our Maker, and to obstruct our progress in all those christian graces and virtues, that tend to promote our inward peace and happiness.

2. By constantly reading the holy scripture, and fervently praying to God, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ: the frequent exercise of which duties, will enlighten the mind, and give it a more perfect understanding of God's Word. The true knowledge of which will so influence our rational powers, that we shall not comply with the treacherous enticement of the world, nor yield to the evil suggestions of our hearts. These resolutions will subdue unruly passions, keep them under the government of reason, and so draw our affections off from sensual objects, that we shall be brought intirely to confide in God, and to commit ourselves unto him, as unto a faithful Creator; in whose hands we are much safer than in our own.

3. By remembering to frequent the house of God, where we may join with the assemblies of God's people, in offering up our spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praises to the transcendent Majesty of heaven, in such a manner as becomes frail, sinful creatures, to their great Creator; by owning our weaknesses, and acknowledging his power and goodness, and our dependance upon him for the supply of our wants, relief in our necessities, and supplies of his grace to enable us to bear with patience,

tience, resignation, and a ready compliance, whatsoever afflictive circumstances God, in his all-wise providence, shall be pleased to place us in for the time to come.

In the house of our God we may offer up our unfeigned praises and thanksgivings, in the most solemn manner, to the God in whom *we live, move, and have our beings*; and who is the author of all the blessings we enjoy or hope for, and without whose upholding power, we cannot subsist one moment; this is the God to whom we may present our sincere praises and thanksgivings for the mercies we have already received, and make our humble acknowledgments, to him for the liberal provision he has made for us, and his constant care and watchful providence over us; but above all, for that amazing and unparralleled regard which he has shewn for our everlasting felicity, in sending his beloved Son to declare his willingness to be reconciled to us, and his readiness to receive us into a state of favour with him; and the giving us sufficient grace for the sanctifying our natures, and perfecting the great work of our redemption. In that holy place we may hear his word explained, and the duties of the christian life enforced; there we may join with the faithful, in commemorating the death and passion of our dear Redeemer, and the inestimable benefits that do accrue to us thereby; by spiritually feeding our souls with the most precious body and blood of our crucified Lord and Saviour*: all which duties, if performed with a

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* Positive duties rightly discharged, are excellently calculated for the support of morality, and therefore they should be performed with great assiduity; but these commands are only to be regarded as instrumental, and no otherwise available to our happiness, than as they produce righteousness, temperance, and universal charity. This distinction between religi-

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deep sense of our vileness and unworthiness, and a just sense of God's goodness and free mercy, will be accepted by him as a grateful tribute of praise, and be a means of recommending us to the divine approbation and benignity.

3. By being frequent in the great and important duty of prayer, I mean that prayer which is offered up to God in secret, where no ear can hear us but God's, nor any eye see us but his piercing eye, which penetrates the heart, pervades the mind, and beholds the most secret recesses, and hidden springs thereof. Now the soul that is thoroughly sensible of her wants, and her inability to supply them; that all things here below, are of too fluctuating a nature to be depended upon, or ever trusted to, for satisfying the desires of an immortal spirit, or affording any happiness that is proportionable to it; needs no arguments, nor wants any motives to persuade her to apply to God for help, or petition the Almighty for his heavenly assistance. Were men really affected with the weakness of human nature, and had a feeling sense of their dependence upon divine providence, joined with a consciousness of being unable to help themselves without his gracious aid; their own pressing necessities are sufficient inducements to make them not only agree to the reasonableness of this duty of prayer, but also to see the absolute necessity of it, and be glad of every opportunity to perform it. They would esteem it an unspeakable privilege, that such sinful creatures who are a compound of dust and ashes, of
flesh

on, and the means of religion, a great and eminent prelate has justly observed, if attended to, would teach men where to point their best endeavours, and where to place their hopes and expectations: for if your zeal and fervour be spent only upon the means of religion, and go no farther, ye are still in your sins. See the present Bishop of *London's* 13th sermon, Vol. I. lately published.

flesh and spirit, may at any time have free recourse to so immensely great, glorious, and good a being as God ; but much more inconceivably so, when they consider how tenderly they are called upon, and lovingly invited to come to him, and lay before him all their wants, acquaint him with all their sorrows, and unburden their souls before him, that they may meet with suitable relief and comfort under the heaviest load of afflictions, and even when every thing else turns against them.

And that we may the more clearly see the necessity of performing this weighty duty of prayer, let us take a view of the troubles man is subject to, with the many dangers and miseries, to which he is frequently exposed. He is liable to many evils and miseries, which he can neither prevent nor redress. He is full of wants which he cannot supply, and compassed about with infirmities which he can never remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never sufficiently provide against. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eagerly to desire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain*: he is surrounded with troubles, and in danger of being pressed down with the weight of adverse occurrences. Man is liable to many mischiefs, and continually exposed to misfortunes. Sometimes we shall see him labouring under some heavy calamity, scarce able to bear up his spirit : at other times we may behold him under great uneasiness of mind, and dejected with a load of sorrow. Friends probably will forsake him, when he stands most in need of their assistance ; and his enemies are very likely to add to the burden of his afflictions by triumphing over him ; or he may be left in such bitterness of grief, that he knows not how to lift up his head, nor where to find any rest or comfort for his soul ; and though these evils

may not happen to every one, yet these, and many more, we are continually exposed to, and can have no security against them but from God. Therefore the only means we possibly can use to escape those evils, or be supported under them, is frequent, humble, and earnest prayer to God, with a profound resignation of ourselves to him, and leaving the event of our petitions to his good pleasure; that if it should not be his will to keep us from the miseries and distresses, to which we are daily and hourly exposed, but God should suffer us to fall into those many evils and calamities, which we have but too just reason to fear, he would be pleased to strengthen our faith, that we may live in an entire dependance upon him, and never trust to any thing else for our preservation and protection; but that we may be always looking up to God, and pouring out our souls before him, that our minds may be fortified with divine grace, and our hearts prepared for every dispensation of his providence; and that we may be possessed with patience and contentment in the dark and gloomy season of adversity,

I have the longer insisted upon this duty of prayer, as firmly believing that there is not any thing that will contribute more to the inward peace and happiness of the mind, than the constant and regular performance of it, when it is joined with faith, in the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. For it will not only procure us a degree of grace, proportionable to the weight of our afflictions, which will cause us to look up to God with joy, in the certain expectation of that eternal life which he has promised to all those who patiently wait for it; but it will also keep us in such an humble frame and temper of mind, as will dispose us in all our troubles to fly immediately, and in earnest, to God for

for succour, and with submission and resignation to wait his good pleasure.

Likewise it will cherish and keep alive the seed of divine grace which God has planted in our souls, and enable us to maintain that spiritual communion that is between God and us, which will be infinitely more to our advantage and satisfaction in the cloudy day of distress and sorrow, than in all the transitory enjoyments of this perishable world.

Lastly, I would again recommend to you the reading the holy scriptures; which I look upon as a very great means for attaining this happy temper of mind, when earnest prayer is made to God, that he would be pleased to accompany the reading of them with his holy Spirit; that they may be engraven on our hearts, and that their precepts may have their due force and proper influence on our minds; that we may be found in the constant practice of all those duties which they have enjoined, as the means necessary to our happiness here in this world, and to fit us for the everlasting enjoyment of God himself in the next. And that they may be effectual to those heavenly purposes, we must always make them the rule of our faith and manners, and assiduously apply ourselves to God for the aids of his grace, to confirm us more stedfastly in the belief of those great and precious promises that are contained in them, and made to all such, as obey their divine and heavenly instructions.

So that whenever we have recourse to the sacred pages, it should be for words of comfort to our souls, and directions how to behave with patience and contentment under all the troubles and evils that may befall us in this uncertain life: if we do so, then we may be truly said to use them for the purpose for which they were originally given us of God, and that this word will be *a light unto our feet,*

feet, and a lamp unto our paths ; it will both direct and comfort us through this vale of misery, by giving us proper directions how we may, in a great measure, escape the evils in it, and afford us comfort, by assuring us, that God will support us under the greatest hardships and miseries that may befall us, in our passage through this dangerous state, to the haven of rest and happiness.

Were the duties, which I have mentioned under this second head, sincerely and constantly practised, they would not only bring us to an acquaintance with ourselves, and to an impartial examination of our own ways ; by which means we should learn that sin is the true cause of all our misery, but we should also discern the justice and equity of God's proceedings with the sons of men ; and no longer complain of providence, for punishing us for our iniquities, far less than we deserve, or revile his administration in the government of the world, for with-holding those things from us, that he knows would be most hurtful to us. We should admire his patience in bearing with us, after so many repeated and long provocations, when we are so worthy of punishment. We should adore and reverence him, for bestowing those good things on such rebellious creatures as we are, who are utterly undeserving of them.

Whatsoever punishment God Almighty may inflict on any of his creatures, it is not always to be looked upon as the effects of his anger, but much rather of his love ; and that tender compassion which he bears to all the children of men, more especially to those that are in covenant with him ; that is, those that are under his immediate care and protection, are become the objects of his love, and made heirs of the grace of life which is in Christ Jesus. These are they to whom he has promised that *all things shall work together for good* ;
and

and that he will *never leave them, nor forsake them*, And though their afflictions were great, yet the design that God had in chastising them, was to calm their unruly passions, that they might see the great evil of sin, discover the dangerous precipice of vice, and be the means of preserving them from a much more dreadful punishment hereafter.

Such an idea of providence as this, and conforming our lives to the rules of the gospel, with a full trust and dependence on God, and a firm belief in him, as the sovereign Lord of the world, and supreme disposer of all events, and that his tender mercy is over all his works, with a well-grounded faith in his promises, will make us content in any state, submissive in every change, and obedient to all his commands. Having now shewn what the means are by which we may obtain this contentedness of mind, I am led in the third place, to speak of the happiness that will naturally follow all such persons as are endued with it.

III. God who is the living fountain of all perfections, and eternally blessed in the contemplation of his own divine excellencies, has implanted in men such inclinations to happiness, that all who partake of the human nature, from the greatest prince to the meanest slave, from the most knowing philosopher, to him who is the most void of understanding; every one has a thirst for felicity, and vehemently desires to come to a participation of it. Happiness is the enquiry of all intelligent beings, and they have such a living sense of the want thereof, that it puts them upon forming various schemes of action, for the obtaining and preserving it. But men, who are strongly charmed with corporeal delights, and live under the instability of restless desires, have their understandings so clouded by disobedient passions, that they often pursue the shadow,

dow, or appearance of felicity, with more ardour than they do that which is real and substantial. They, by degrees, alter the temper of their souls, and do so abandon rational delights for the false pleasures of sensuality, that their affections are wholly taken up with terrene objects, and their understandings employed in gratifying the lower appetites ; by which means earthly satisfactions prevail over spiritual and immortal joy ; so that they are not likely to acquire true blessedness, nor ever come to the enjoyment of it. One present vanity in the judgment of sensual men, will outweigh all the glories of futurity ; and so biassed are their carnal minds, that the heavenly reward of a blessed immortality, although it is offered upon the most rational terms, will not prevail with them to seek after it, or to exchange their sensual pleasures, for those that are sublime and heavenly. Earthly minds have no taste for spiritual delights, their palates are so vitiated with luscious vanities, that they even despise the most wholesome food, and contemptuously reject the bread of angels. Men who are thus strangely infatuated, and thus scornfully treat divine mercies, are so deceived by the fire of warm imaginations, that they are become intire slaves to their passions, and so bound with the chains of iniquity, that although some of those chains, are more glittering, yet they are not less weighty, but all such persons as are thus fettered, deprive themselves of true liberty, and cannot enjoy perfect freedom. Therefore all endeavours should be used, and every possible method tried, to deliver ourselves from those evils, and to recover the right use of our reason, that the time we have lost upon vanities, may be redeemed by doubling our diligence, and ardently labouring to regain God's image, and have our hearts affected with heavenly objects. For spiritual objects, when they are duly entertained, have
such

such a renewing and transforming power in them; that the heaven we devoutly contemplate, and the glory we spiritually think of, will create in our minds pure desires, and infuse such refined joys into our souls, as none but God can give, nor any other being besides him remove. All this mighty maze of things, or whatsoever this tempting world can offer, however beautifully varnished over, or magnificently represented, will only serve to amuse us, but can never make our souls happy, they are too short in their duration, and so wounding to our consciences, that they will never satisfy our affections, nor free our minds from the melancholy ideas of misery and sorrow.

No, happiness is not to be found in any other path than that of meekness, humility, and self-denial; there we may be sure to meet with it, if we walk on in it to the end, in righteousness and true holiness, and in the sincere practice of virtue and real religion: for the haughty and imperious man cannot attain it, the avaritious mind is utterly unacquainted with it; and those that abound in wealth, and can command all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, are often greater strangers to it than the meanest peasant: nay, for the most part, there is more true happiness lodged in the breast of a mean shepherd, than is to be found in him that weilds a sceptre.

The voluptuous epicure makes his happiness to consist in the gratifying his lust, and indulging his ungovernable passions, and pleasing his sensual appetites; but this is the happiness of a beast, and not of a rational and intelligent being; for he that has nothing else to glory in, but the gratification of his sinful lusts and passions, puts himself upon a level with the brute creation. In a word, whatsoever pleasures or enjoyments the sensualists may boast of, they are no other than what are common

to the brute, and so long as he retains so great an affection for sensuality, he must for ever remain a stranger to true felicity. But we will suppose him in the possession of all the enjoyments that this world affords, and that he had even acquired his utmost wishes; they are at best but a round of insipid pleasures, or a dull repetition of the same thing over again. And, if we may believe the experience of one who had as great a share of them as any of the sons of men, and had been conversant with every scene of life, and filled the highest station in it; he pronounces them all but *vanity and vexation of spirit*.

And impossible it is that any sensual pleasures should be otherwise, for being mingled with so many bitter ingredients, they will cause a great deal of trouble and sorrow; but will never procure us that sound peace or satisfaction which we are in the pursuit of. And what is much worse, too great a familiarity with them, will keep us from gaining an acquaintance with those more sublime and spiritual delights, which are the only pleasures of the mind, and the glory of a reasonable creature, and by which he is distinguished from the beasts that perish. Seeing these things are so, and that happiness is not to be found in any sinful course; and that all such as are pleading for the cause of sensuality, are at the greatest distance from true felicity, and never likely to come to the enjoyment of it. There are none but humble and contented minds, that know what happiness is, or ever feel the pleasures of it; that is, none but such as have given up themselves to God, are obedient to his laws, and directed by his wisdom; and are resolved, by the assistance of divine grace, to be governed by him, and wholly to depend upon him for whatever they stand in need of. Patiently to endure, and contentedly to acquiesce in whatsoever provi-

providence shall inflict, or however God may dispose of them, for the future. Minds thus resigned to God, are not only free from all distracting thoughts, which stretch and rack the minds of men; and all imaginary evils, which are very often as bad, if not worse, than real ones; and from most of the troubles and anxieties of life, which perplex uneasy and discontented spirits; but there naturally follows serenity of mind, with inward peace, satisfaction, and happiness; together with secret pleasure and delight springing up in their minds, which they prefer before all external enjoyment, though ever so gilded over.

This is the happiness that follows contentment, and a greater none can be possessed of, while they continue on this side the grave. For what greater happiness can we desire to have, whilst we abide in this mortal state, a state which is subject to many changes, and liable to various alterations, than to have a mind equal to every condition; in prosperity not to soar too high; in adversity not to sink too low; not to be exalted with a large fortune, nor depressed with a narrow one; but always to live as those who depend entirely upon God, who is the fountain and spring of happiness, and from whom we derive whatever portion we enjoy of true felicity.

The happiness which we receive from God, has such a divine power and energy attending it, that it will, in a great measure, clear the mind of all those disorderly agitations of the passions, which interrupt its tranquility, and disturb that repose and confidence it places in God, and that firm reliance on him, for whatsoever blessings we enjoy. It will likewise take us off, from that anxiousness after what we have not, and probably what we are never likely to have, and brings us to the comfortable enjoyment of such things as we are in the possession of.

This happiness has such a transcendent greatness in it, that it will raise our souls above the fading and fleeting enjoyments of this changeable world, and bring us from earth to heaven; to a devout attendance upon God, who is a perpetual source of happiness; and to the contemplation of such bright and glorious objects, as we shall be happy in the enjoyment of, to all eternity.

This joy and happiness is so incomparably great and excellent, that it is not to be found among any of the creatures, but only in the Creator, *who is God over all, blessed for evermore.* And he is the Author of all that happiness created beings enjoy; and the manner in which it is received by them is by communication from him; and though it is conveyed secretly into their souls, yet it springs from an inexhaustible fountain, that it will be in them *a well of water springing up into eternal life.*

This happiness is quite different from that of the world, which is short and transitory, uncertain and precarious, gross and unsatisfactory; a circle of giddy fluctuating transports, of mean contemptible things, when compared with that eternal peace and comfort, which comes from God, who is the source of happiness, the center of rest, and the stay and support of the whole creation. For the happiness we receive from God, is permanent and lasting, and will remain with us, when we stand most in need of it; when lying on the bed of sickness, it will revive, and cheer our languishing spirits, it will abide by us, when on the verge of life, and support and comfort us, when in and under the bitter agonies of death. It will accompany our naked spirits into the other world, into new and surprizing realms of light and blessedness, and continue with us, when our souls shall stand before the throne of God, waiting for the perfecting our happiness, and consummating our joy, in the reviving presence of the

the ever glorious God, and with the blessed Jesus, who is the Mediator of the new covenant, and with the august assembly of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. This is that joy and happiness, which is the blessed effect of contentment, or, that celestial disposition of soul, which none can enjoy, but such as wholly place their confidence in God, and are satisfied with that provision made for them, by the kind hand of providence; and though sometimes it may be very sparing and small, yet they secretly feel those divine comforts within, which are of infinite more value to them, than any outward circumstances can possibly make them, were they ever so prosperous and flourishing. Persons who are warmed with these sublime principles, and the inward consolation of the spirit of peace, feel the secret and ineffable joys of the Holy Ghost, by which they are made truly sensible, *That the ways of God, are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths are peace.* And though they were stripped of all external enjoyments, or deprived of all outward felicity, yet notwithstanding the grievousness of those calamities, they possess all things, as the apostle speaks, *i. e.* they are possessed of the true and substantial riches; the riches of the mind, and their souls are cloathed with all the beautiful graces, and charming virtues of the christian life, innocence and integrity, real goodness and undissembled piety, with a hope full of a blessed and glorious immortality. And till men become thus inwardly affected with the ways of God, and to make his service their chief delight and pleasure, they may talk of pleasures and enjoyments, says an eminent prelate, but no man ever truly found them, till he became acquainted with God, and was made a partaker of his spiritual favour, and lived in an entire friendship and communion with him. A pious
author

author speaking of the blessedness of those souls, who maintain communion with God, by contemplations on the divine presence, and the sacred exercise of real religion and virtue. How happy, says he, is an intelligent being, who by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul; though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature looks black about him, he has his light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors which encompass him. He knows that his helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any one else can be, which is capable of terrifying and annoying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that being, who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, and his glory, and the lifter up of his head. In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest and best of beings, and perceives within himself, such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful to him, than any thing that can be met with, in the conversation or communication with his creatures. Even in the hour of death, he considers the pains of his dissolution, to be nothing else, but the breaking down of that partition which stands betwixt his soul, and the light of that being, who is always present with him, and about to manifest itself to him, in fulness of joy.

If we would be thus happy, and thus sensible of our Maker's presence, from the secret effects of his mercy and goodness, we must suppress the first motions of sin, and keep such a watch over all our words and actions, that in the sacred language of scripture, *his soul may have pleasure in us, and his holy spirit delight to reside and dwell in us.*

Agreeably

Agreeably to which doctrine, *Seneca* in his epistles, has this very remarkable passage. There is a holy spirit residing in us, who watches and observes both good and evil men, and will treat us in the same manner that we treat him. In order to participate of these spiritual blessings, to be efficaciously supported under all our troubles, and divinely comforted in our last dissolving moments, we must warm our hearts with the sacred fire of devotion, and ardently endeavour, so to influence our affections, that we may never separate ourselves from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, by fixing our minds on any thing here below, or seeking for true happiness, in any other ways or means, than those that are appointed by God. Would we then continue in the divine favour, we must resign ourselves up to God, and make the practice of virtue and true religion our greatest delight, and never propose any real happiness to ourselves, but what we receive from thence, nor look for any sound peace, or durable joy, but what we derive from the sweet and comfortable influences of divine grace, and the indwelling power of God's holy spirit. For had we not a powerful friend within, who sets upon the altar of our impure hearts, to clear off the sullied incense, that ascends from thence toward heaven, our religious addresses would never reach the divine presence, nor be received at God's tremendous throne. But now we have an advocate, whose sacred interest is sufficient, in the celestial court, to recommend to the utmost our imperfect services, if we are sincere in our duty, and willing to use his divine aid, and the never-failing assistance of him, who helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. Did men earnestly endeavour to cultivate heavenly mindedness, they would feel the blessed effects of divine help, and that happiness which

God

God is the author of, and which excels all the mutable delights of sense, and the enjoyments of this lower world, as much as the light of the sun, when shining in his meridian brightness, does that of the moon. And though humble minds may be dreadfully assaulted, and have various temptations laid in their way, by wicked and designing men, to hinder them from persevering in their duty, and to divert them from the practice of it, yet they will not regard those crafty delusions, nor give any heed to their wicked suggestions. Men thoroughly acquainted with spiritual pleasures, and made truly sensible of their superior worth and excellency, before they can be prevailed on to part with those pleasures, must offer the greatest violence to their reason, and do despite to the spirit of grace, which will cause an intestine war within, and terribly alarm their souls. Moreover, the engaging in such a dreadful combat, and resisting the motions of that divine monitor within, will greatly endanger their everlasting felicity, and the inconceivable blessing of eternal salvation, and this those pious and humble souls, are determined not to do, nor reproachfully to run the hazard of, for the sake of any of those glittering, but perishing enjoyments of this uncertain life. But notwithstanding these discouragements, persons actuated by the sacred principles of virtue, will, by the help of that divine spirit, which they have always had most comfort of, in times of difficulty and trouble, never wilfully swerve from their obedience, but be satisfied with any condition, provided they may be able to keep that peace of mind, and to retain that joy in heart which the world cannot give, nor with all its fallacious charms be ever able to deprive them of.

I have now shewn what that happiness is, which follows contentment, and that none can be truly happy but such as are possessed of it. I am now
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led in the last place, to make such observations on the advantages that accrue to us by learning this salutary lesson, as may tend to quicken our endeavours after it, and conclude. But before I proceed, it will be necessary to advise you, never to think of obtaining such an heavenly temper of mind, as the greatest contrarieties of events cannot alter, nor ever expect that sweetness of disposition, the beauty of which, no circumstances of distress can deface, unless you are resolved to withdraw your affections from the world, and wholly to confide in God, and depend intirely upon him, for whatsoever you want, or may stand in need of. Neither must we ever expect that peace of mind, nor hope to maintain that joy in heart, which surpasses all the understandings of men, without the sincere practice of virtue, and true religion; for the nearer we approach to God, in the imitation of all his moral perfections, the happier we shall be in the inward frame and disposition of our souls. Moreover, great care must be taken, to curb our unruly desires, that we may not be too swift in motion after the things of the world, nor have our imaginations swelled with earthly glories, lest we become too warmly affected with them, or too powerfully heated by them; for the deeper they strike our senses, the more difficult and harder it will be to forsake them, and the closer our affections are united to the creature, the greater will be our distance from our Creator. We must likewise remember, that whoever is in friendship with the world, is at enmity with God, and he that is an enemy to the world, is a friend to God, and his own eternal happiness. Were men's minds properly affected with these things, and the evil consequences of complying with them, they would loosen their affections from the world, and leave off immoderately pursuing, the pleasures and enjoyments thereof,

thereof, and not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon, by such things as serve only to torment and vex us; things that will weary us in pursuit of them, but will never afford us that sound peace and durable satisfaction, which they promised us in possession. The fleeting enjoyments of sense, are so deceivable, that when we have gratified every animal passion, and complied with their exorbitant requests, these passions are so far from being quieted, or from having their impetuosity restrained, that they commonly grow more insolent, and more extravagant and outrageous in their demands. So that instead of making our minds more easy, by yielding to the importunities of restless desires, and following the enchanting pleasures of sense, we in so doing, make ourselves more uneasy, and greatly annoy and disturb the peace and tranquility of our souls. For in the height of our imaginary felicity, those pleasures swiftly fly away, and cause us not only grievously to reflect upon our folly, but also leave a lasting, and bitter sting behind them. Therefore, we should carefully guard against those allurements, that we may not be ensnared by them, nor fall a dreadful sacrifice to them. For man is a frail dependent creature, prompt to lean somewhere by the necessity of his nature; but where can he do this, with so much reason and safety as upon God, let him look into the bowels of the earth, and search into the hidden treasures thereof, and he will find no supports in any part of the globe, equal to those of a benign and omnipotent providence. The epicure may exalt his sensuality, and others set up for their chief good, some gilded machine, or perishing felicity, yet it will be impossible for the soul, to find any durable satisfaction, in any of these earthly amusements. The desires which perpetually rise in the mind, prevent enjoyment; unexpected difficulties intervene, which gives disturbance; so that nothing is more evident,

evident, then man is not sufficient for his own happiness. To whom then shall we fly for succour, but to him who surrounds all nature with his power, and is able to satisfy our most ardent wishes. The thoughts of which, will afford the mind great felicity, and the expectation of such a happiness communicated to us, as is commensurate to our most extensive faculties, will fill the soul with the highest pleasure, and most lasting satisfaction. Since we cannot possess our souls in patience, or acquire that settled temper of mind, which will make us happy in any circumstances, without abandoning the criminal paths of vice, and duly regulating our inordinate passions, let us call up all our intellectual powers, and employ them in using such methods as will make those passions subject to our reason, and all our desires obedient to God's commands. By doing so, these disturbers of our peace, and wounders of our consciences, will be in a great measure suppressed, and we shall be more at leisure, and better disposed, for the service of God and religion, and our hearts more at liberty, and freer for the exercise of virtue and goodness, more ready to attend to any means that are most likely to acquire that happiness which will endure for ever. For the happiness that terminates with time, is not the happiness of spirits fitted for eternity, and therefore not worth our hurrying after, nor striving for.

Would we have nothing to obstruct, or hinder us from closing with those means that tend to quicken our endeavours after real happiness, we must clear our minds of all filthy images, and give no entertainment to evil imaginations, or wicked desires; we must purify our hearts, and cleanse those fountains of corruption, from whence these impure streams flow, and though we are not sufficient of ourselves, to do any thing as of ourselves, yet if we vigilantly exert our best faculties, God

will co-operate with our endeavours, and enable us to cleanse our hearts, to subdue our sinful lusts, and disobedient passions; to clear our minds of all evil imaginations, and wicked desires: And if we persevere in our duty, we shall be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and sin shall never get the dominion over us. For the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, will be applied to our souls, and effectually wash them from the guilt and pollution of it. Would you succeed in the performance of this great work, on which depends your present and future happiness, you must never begin it in your own strength, but first in a self-diffident manner, earnestly address yourselves to God in prayer, who is a never-failing spring of goodness, that you may obtain such communications of his grace, as will cause great humility in your minds, and bring you wholly to confide in God, and intirely to rely upon his mercy and goodness.

The acquiring of this divine gift, and a firm belief in our blessed Redeemer, and adorable Saviour of the world, will with a stedfast resolution to obey his laws, produce that inward peace of mind, and that heavenly disposition of soul, which this earthly globe with all its pomp, and splendor can neither give nor take away; therefore let us not begin God's work with an arm of flesh, nor presume too much upon our own strength; for without the gracious assistance of his celestial aid, our best efforts will ever prove fruitless and abortive.

I thought it necessary before I entered on my last head of discourse, to caution you against the vanities of the world, and the impossibility of obtaining peace of mind, whilst you depend upon any things here below. For unless we are convinced of the danger and unhappiness of trusting to, and relying upon earthly possessions, we shall be never persuaded to depend upon God, from whom
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alone cometh real joy and true blessedness. I have likewise taken notice of the obligation we are under, from the impotency of our mortal natures, and the mutability and deceitfulness of all sublunary pleasures, to go immediately in all our troubles to God, and humbly to implore the influences of his divine help, that we may be able to conquer our vicious inclinations, and to exchange our brutal delights, for those that are rational and sublime. These things we must earnestly endeavour after, that pious thoughts and holy resolutions, may make such deep impressions on our souls, as will not only remove all those prejudices, which we have conceived against internal peace, but also make us ready to comply with, and willing to pursue and embrace any means that are most likely to quicken our obedience, and to obtain such divine succours from above, as will strengthen us with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

I shall now proceed in the method I proposed, which were to make such observations on the advantages that accrue to us, by learning this comfortable lesson of contentment, as will incline us heartily to study it, and seek after the benefits that are gained by it.

The first observation I shall make, is that without contentment, *i. e.* without being as satisfied as our present state will admit, we can have no real comfort or pleasure in this world, nor inclination or leisure to prepare for the next. So long as we are dissatisfied with our condition, and displeased with that situation providence has placed us in, or are unwilling to acknowledge God's absolute right to dispose of us in such a manner, as is most agreeable to his unerring wisdom, our minds must necessarily remain uneasy, and we be rendered unfit for heavenly meditation, or to offer up spiritual sacrifices

sacrifices to God. So that unless this inward dissatisfaction be removed, we shall be incapable of discharging either social or moral duties, and so busied in these dusky regions of mortality, that although nothing is more uncertain than human life, yet we make but little or no preparation for death. These are some of the sad effects of discontent, and were we but calmly and seriously to consider of them, we should find them sad indeed; for we not only lose the enjoyment of what we have, by being anxious after what we have not, but we also enervate our intellectual powers, and do so reproachfully cloud our understandings, that we are utterlyaverse to any other delights, than those of an earthly paradise, and such as correspond with our carnal apprehensions. The violence * of ungovernable passions, hurry us after such things, as will rather forward and increase, than lessen or abate the disquietudes of our minds, but will never afford us any real comfort or durable satisfaction, when under any of the calamities, and evils, with which we are constantly surrounded.

Again, Sober reflections on the miseries of such as know no pleasure superior to those of sense, are enough to convince us of the folly and unhappiness of all those, who are carried away with the fluctuating and fleeting pleasures thereof. Sensual men are so eager in pursuing those things, which experience sufficiently proves, have it not in their power to satisfy the desires of their minds, that they are become quite strangers to spiritual delights, and their fondness for earthly things, leave them

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* Is it not a pity, that the passions, which are of excellent service to mankind, when properly exercised, should not be set at a true pitch, since they are the movements of the soul, therefore great care should be taken, to place them on worthy objects: For if they are rightly fixed, the happiness of life is promoted, and it will be impossible to enjoy ourselves so agreeably, as when our affections are justly directed, and rightly employed,

no taste or relish for heavenly things. Were unprejudiced reflections made on these things, we should find the condition of such men, to be really miserable, for their happiness always lies at a distance, and it never consists in what they have, but in what they have not, and the pleasures they propose to themselves, are so precarious and uncertain, that they are not sure they shall ever enjoy them. But supposing they were certain to participate of those pleasures they so heartily wish for, and unweariedly seek after, this they cannot be certain of, that those pleasures will not bring with them, much more evil than good. For often the things we have been most desirous of, and most solicitously concerned about, we have had the greatest reason to wish that we had never given ourselves any trouble after them, nor contracted any acquaintance with them. These considerations weighed impartially, would discover the misery of the mind without contentment, and are enough to cure us of an inordinate love for the world, and to make us give over chasing the empty and sordid pleasures thereof. Pleasures that are always in our expectations greatest, and shine with the brightest lustre when at a distance, but lessen when we make a nearer approach to them. Earthly delights are so deceitful, that they seldom answer the ideas we have formed of them, for if we come to be possessed of them, those slippery amusements frequently vanish, and our supposed felicity comes to nothing. In a word, were the vanities of the world, and the instability of human affairs, with the bitter remembrance of the sorrows and troubles we have met with, in closely pursuing them, but properly to affect our deceived minds, they would make us retreat from the world, and retire immediately into ourselves, and put us upon learning this divine and heavenly lesson, which would qualify

us for any condition in life; and we should be brought to have such dispositions, as would arm us against all the hardships and disappointments thereof. A lesson, which if well learned, will make us happy in the worst circumstances, and without it, we shall be but miserable in the best. These observations strongly prove the misery of the mind, without a feigned submission to the will of God, and that men are insensibly led on to pursue their own ruin, who have too great an intimacy with the world. For it unsettles their minds, makes men strangers to themselves, and intirely forgetful of their kind Creator, and destitute of all those chaste and excellent pleasures which are peculiar to the soul of man.

2dly. I shall now make some observations on the happiness of the mind with contentment. Content is the gift of God, and not the certain effect of any thing here below, and the value of it is too great, to be bestowed on any, but such as do with submission and humility, diligently seek for it, and are made sensible of its real worth and transcendent excellency. For it removes our uneasinesses, quiets our minds, reconciles to any state, banishes all murmuring and distrustful thought of providence, sets us above the reach of calumny and contempt, makes the hardest yoke easy, and the heaviest burden light. Whenever this divine gift is introduced into our souls, we shall be no longer slaves to the enticements of the world, nor held in captivity by any of its ensnaring charms; but we shall be at full liberty to discharge those great important duties of virtue and religion, which will render us highly acceptable to a good and merciful God, and every way pleasant and agreeable to all sincere and upright men. Duties that will purify and refine our minds, and make them fit to dwell with immortal spirits, to have an eternal rest with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. This di-
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vine * gift, whenever we come to the enjoyment of it, will bring us to the free use of our reason, and put us upon our guard, and make us so to watch the sudden emotions of our minds, that we shall not be so apt, to break out into anger, at every cross accident we may meet with, nor be discomposed at every injury that may be offered us. For it will take off the roughness of our tempers, make our passions smooth and even, and we shall be happy within ourselves, and a pleasure to all around us. This virtuous and heavenly qualification of mind, will form the soul for every condition in life, and when it has got possession of our hearts, we shall no longer be enquiring abroad after happiness, but looking for it at home, where it is most likely to be found; and there we shall find our true happiness lies, and we shall experience that all our searches for it in things without, will ever prove vain and ineffectual. We shall then discover the folly of placing our affections on the world, and the wisdom of looking with an indifferency on every thing here below. We shall then feel with delight and inward satisfaction, the happiness of fixing our minds stedfastly on God, and depending intirely upon him, for all the blessings we enjoy in this world, and that glorious reward we hope for, in the next. In thus humbly submitting ourselves to the divine pleasure, and in reducing the appetites of our bodies, to the reason of our minds, consists our truest interest and greatest felicity. We shall then

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* Resignation is an easy pillow, on which the mind may quietly rest, without penetrating into the secrets of nature, or making undue excursions into futurity. Let me take sanctuary in this divine virtue, then I shall be perfectly satisfied, that he who made me to be happy here, will not disappoint my hopes and expectations of happiness hereafter. The fixing my soul on this immoveable rock, that my future as well as my present state, are both ordered by an almighty and good God, will afford me the greatest tranquility.

be thoroughly satisfied with any state or condition, be it ever so mean, and not envious at the prosperity of others, be they ever so great. We shall be so firmly persuaded of God's goodness, and of his almighty protection, from the many instances we have had of his love, and his readiness to help, and relieve us in our greatest dangers, that we shall fear no evils, nor have any reason to doubt of his goodness. But that in all our distresses, we shall have recourse to God for succour, and in the time of the heaviest affliction, we shall fly immediately to him for refuge, not doubting, but that in God's good time, we shall have a happy deliverance out of all our troubles, or meet with such relief as will keep us from sinking under them, or from being oppressed with the weight of them.

Finally, The contented man looks upon sin as the worst of evils; and dreads nothing so much as its fatal consequences. He is sensible that it will lie like a heavy weight upon the mind, and so press down the soul, that it cannot soar aloft: It will spoil all his pleasures, and shorten all his enjoyments. As to this world, he looks upon it as really what it is, the seat of disappointments, and therefore takes things as he finds them, and though assured he shall meet with much rough way and bad weather, ill treatment from wicked and designing men, many insults from rude passengers as he passes along in the road of life; and for no other reason, but because he is inflexibly resolved to continue in the narrow and sure path of virtue; yet, he is determined not to enter into the broad and slippery way of vice; because it cannot be long before he shall be at his journey's end. For death, like the friendly angel which delivered *St. Peter* out of prison, will free his immortal spirit, from its tabernacle of earth; and then the soul will take its flight into the glorious realms of light and immortality; where

where it will dwell in an uninterrupted state of bliss, and his days of mourning shall be over: His wearied soul shall for ever enjoy an eternal rest, in the presence of that God who will *wipe away all tears from his eyes*, and remove every sorrow from his heart; *pain and sickness, sorrow and crying, shall be no more. The sun shall not scorch him by day, nor the moon freeze him by night. For the Lord God will be his everlasting light and life, and he shall reign with him for ever and ever.* This is the true foundation of a christian's comfort and support; that in the midst of all the troubles and calamities which he meets with here below, he can look up to an eternity of joy, and unmixed pleasures above. I have now done with what I proposed: And if these observations were impregnated with a divine warmth on our hearts, we shall no longer put off the learning this great and important lesson; but immediately set about it, and assiduously apply ourselves to it, with a firm resolution of persevering in it, till we have truly *learned in whatsoever state we are in, to be therewith content.*

* To conclude: *Let us who are of the Day, be sober*; that is, let us, who enjoy the glorious light

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* I have wholly endeavoured through this discourse, to point out such means as will reduce the passions to obedience, that right reason might not be degraded, or sacrificed, by the power of over-bearing appetites: but that truth may preside and govern the intellectual œconomy. This being the sure method to establish true peace of mind, and render human life more agreeable, the fear of death less terrible, and shew us that we can only rest securely in resignation to the will of the Supreme Being. When our souls are thus elevated to heaven, it matters little what spot of earth we dwell on, or what glittering titles or different honours we are possessed of. If we would maintain tranquility of mind, amidst all the accidents of life to which we are exposed, we must not be transported by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity, because our adherence to this disposition will make us proof against the dangers of both these states.

of the gospel, provoke not God to withdraw it from us, by depreciating his beneficence; or reviling his administration in the government of the world; or murmuring, or complaining of his providence, for not humouring us in our wickedness, and indulging us in our extravagancies. But if we would have this great and invaluable blessing continued to us, let us often call to mind the inconceivable greatness of God's love, in bestowing it on us; who were always acting in direct opposition to him, and living in open rebellion against him; and then instead of reproaching his providence, or calling in question his wisdom, power, and goodness, we shall see the greatest reason to reverence and adore him: For he shewed the most compassionate, and tender regard for our spiritual and eternal welfare, when we took none for ourselves; and spared us, who justly deserved to be punished, when he might have cut us off, in the midst of our grievous crimes, and repeated provocations; and have commanded us immediately, to appear before him at his judgment-seat.

In fine: Let us humbly submit ourselves to God, and we shall find that nothing will turn more to our advantage, than an entire submission to his will, and an universal obedience to his laws; acknowledging his justice in all his proceedings with us; then may we depend upon him without fear, and rely upon him without any danger of being deceived. He bears an everlasting love to us, and is always concerned for our present and future felicity. God is an immutable Being, and, in all his purposes of goodness, unchangeable; *the same God yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; therefore, whoever cheerfully resigns himself to the will of the Almighty, and is content with that station, his providence has placed him in, shall have the *eternal God for his refuge, and underneath him will be his*
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everlasting arms; that will keep him from falling into the midst of those many evils, with which he is surrounded; and preserve him from becoming a prey to the fury of his enemies.

Let us remember the shortness of life, the certainty of death; and that it cannot be long before the king of terrors will be upon us, and summon us immediately to appear before the awful tribunal of God. Let us frequently reflect on the miseries of those, who shall be found at that day, to have forfeited their right to God's favour, and have lost their title to that happiness, which will endure for ever; by speaking contemptuously of his providence, and impeaching his justice, by questioning his goodness, or casting contempt on his wise and just administration. Were our hearts thoroughly sensible of these things, and freed from the entanglements of earthly desires, and the deceitful charms of noxious appetites, we should enjoy that sweet serenity of mind, and that full satisfaction in ourselves, which would make us more chearful in our obedience, and more in earnest seeking after God. When thus devoutly and vigilantly exercised, if our affections reached the throne of mercy, and entered heaven on the wings of fervent prayer, we shall receive such divine succours from above, as will enable us to mortify every disorderly passion that may stand in our way, to obstruct our endeavours, or to retard our progress in the christian life. Such thoughts as these would fix in our minds a just sense of our uncertain state, as well as the impotency and weakness of our natures; so that if attended to, they would make us truly sensible, that the strongest efforts we are capable of making towards obtaining inward peace and tranquility of soul, without the divine concurrence, will ever prove fruitless and unsuccessful. Therefore, let us in a firm persuasion of God's goodness, and a just
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sense of our unworthiness, humbly address ourselves to him, to pardon our sins, and to cleanse us from the defilements of them, with the precious blood of his son : That these implacable enemies of our peace may be washed away. When men have thus felt the divine energy, they will not only be able to pass this vale of misery and sorrow, with a degree of pleasure and satisfaction, but God will also at the end of their warfare, lead them into his kingdom of everlasting bliss, and to those inconceivable rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right-hand for evermore. Since then our blessings are so immensely great, we should labour to maintain our property in them ; for many are the experiments the world affords, and which sense provides us with, to deprive us of our heavenly inheritance, and to disarm us of the divine support ; but all their stratagems will be in vain, and their most subtil inventions to no purpose, if we will keep a strict watch over ourselves, and rely upon him who is the rock of ages, and confidence of all the ends of the earth. If then we have secured an interest in God, and in his sacred covenant of grace and mercy, he will so guard us by his almighty power, and afford us such interposing rays of happiness, that we shall have no evils to fear from him, nor from the most terrifying productions of nature, but when all things look black around us, and storms are gathering so thick about us, that we know not where to fly for shelter, in the midst of all these terrible commotions, we may find a sure hiding-place in God, and a refuge in the sanctuary of the most high. Considerations on the greatness of God's glorious majesty, and on the divine all-sufficiency, caused the prophet to use these rapturous expressions, and to break forth into these triumphant exultations, *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail,*
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and the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls, yet, says he, will I rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of my salvation. God who is infinite in power, has all nature entirely at his disposal, and can supply us in every condition, he is *from everlasting to everlasting, and his righteousness extends to childrens children, and his faithfulness to all generations.* Therefore, God's people have no reason to be dismayed, so long as their minds are stayed on him, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened, nor is his power and goodness in the least diminished, but whenever they are involved in any great calamity, or grievously oppressed with any sore affliction, if they will patiently resign themselves to God, and quietly wait the * issue and event of things, God will speak peace to their afflicted souls, and revive their sorrowful hearts, with the light of his countenance, and with the joy of his propitious presence. So that when we have passed the waves, and storms of this tempestuous world; and have fought the good fight of faith, we shall obtain the salvation of our souls, and be crowned with joy and gladness in the day of the Lord Jesus. Then will all his obedient servants, be eternally fixed in mansions of unmixed pleasures, and so placed under the divine protection, that no evils can approach to hurt them, or any thing of an unquiet or injurious nature

* Instead of pretending to censure the order of providence, let us carefully mend our own conduct, and when we are expostulating with the Deity, think of these admirable verses of *Cleanthes*.

Parent of nature, master of the world,
Where'er thy providence directs, behold
My steps with chearful resignation turn,
Fate leads the willing, drags the backward on,
Why should I grieve, when grieving I must bear,
Or take with guilt what guiltless I might share.

See Reflections on Exile.

nature come near to disturb the peaceable inhabitants of those serene regions. There only the truly resigned soul shall reign in triumph; and real righteousness will be displayed in full glory and unchangeable beauty. I shall now close this discourse with an excellent collect of our church.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise: that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*** In whatever part of this discourse, I speak of the Holy Spirit's assistance, I mean a power which operates with our rational faculties, and brings the mind with freedom to the exercise of love and universal benevolence: things, God-like in their nature, and unchangeable in their obligation. Or whatever mention is made of faith, I do not mean a blind implicit belief, or a number of airy notions in the head, that have no tendency to promote goodness, but, by faith, I understand a principle seated in the heart, grounded on sufficient reason, supported by the weight of its authority, and which is productive of every moral and social duty. For the great harmony of the world consists in the just subordination of the several ranks of beings to one another, and of all to the supreme director, who has appointed them.

Devout



Devout Ejaculations and Prayers.

OUR help cometh from thee, O Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Comfort the souls of thy servants, for unto thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls.

In thee do we put our trust all the day long, let us not be confounded.

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful.

Turn again then unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee.

I found trouble and heaviness, and I called upon the name of the Lord; O Lord I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them, and saveth them out of all their troubles.

Blessed are the People, whose God is the Lord Jehovah, and blessed are the folk that he hath chosen to himself, to be his inheritance.

The Lord is my strength, and my shield, my heart hath trusted in him, and I am helped.

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble, and known my soul in adversities.

My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

For the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, who dwells in the high and holy place, does not disdain to dwell with him, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to relieve the hearts of the sorrowful ones.

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A Prayer

A Prayer for Contentment.

LORD, root out of my soul all that original corruption, which is the fountain of all evil, cleanse by thy holy spirit that impure heart from whence all wicked thoughts and evil desires proceed, learn me in whatever state I am, therewith to be content; let me envy no one his gifts, or possessions, keep me from a worldly and a covetous heart. Let me remember that godliness with contentment, is great gain, and that it is my duty to be satisfied, if I have only food and raiment; and even though I should sometimes want these, suffer me not, O God, to murmur against thy providence, or attempt to procure them by unlawful means, but patiently to wait on thee, in humble and constant prayer; and thus do thou most gracious God, write all thy laws in my heart, for the sake of Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour. *Amen.*

A Prayer for fixing the mind stedfastly on God.

ALmighty God, who art the only supreme happiness of the soul of man, without the enjoyment of whom, she must ever dwell in disquietude and trouble; fix all the thoughts and affections of my soul upon thee, who alone canst satisfy all her desires, and give her a peace that passeth all understanding. I have sufficiently experienced the incapacity of all earthly enjoyments to make me happy, and the desires of my soul after them return back into my breast, empty or dissatisfied, at those many disappointments they have met with, and are still craving something beyond the pleasures of this life, to fill my appetites with perfect satisfaction. Nothing but God, and the enjoyment of him, is able to do this: Let my thoughts, my desires, and all the affections of my soul, meet with unspeakable satisfaction in him, who

who is the only author and fountain of happiness; let them soar above the empty and sordid pleasures of this world, and wing my soul in its flight upwards, to that perfect state of bliss, where thou shalt communicate thyself to her, in such measures of thy spirit, that she shall have nothing more to desire, nothing to disappoint her appetites, nothing to make her uneasy, but thou shalt be all in all, and the sight of thee and thy glory, be her great and endless happiness to all eternity. *Amen.*

A Prayer to enable us to place all our trust and confidence in God.

WE humbly beseech thee, O father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and for the glory of thy name, turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved; and grant that in all our troubles, we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness and pureness of living to thy honour and glory, through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer to remove the evils we feel, and to prevent those we fear.

O GOD merciful Father, that despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desires of such as be sorrowful, mercifully assist our prayers that we make before thee, in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us, and graciously hear us that those evils, which the craft and subtilty of the devil, or man worketh against us, may be brought to nought, and by the providence of thy goodness they may be dispersed; that we thy servants being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto thee in thy holy church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for grace to enable us, to place all our passions under the power of reason, that we may in all conditions, intirely submit to the divine direction.

ALMIGHTY God, in whose hands are the hearts of men, and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, in mercy look down upon us, who of ourselves cannot do any thing that is good without thee, thou knowest what we are, and rememberest whereof we are made, and how apt we are to forget it. Let thy goodness help our infirmities, and make us such masters of our passions, that the severest dispensations of thy providence, may never be uneasy to us, nor any provocations from men hurry us to rage, or impatience, but amidst the many severe trials we meet with, teach us to preserve a calm and easy temper, a spirit serene and gentle, and ready to be intreated. Root out of our hearts that pride and vanity, which cleaves so close to our depraved natures, and give us such a meek and quiet spirit, as will be of great price in the sight of thee our God, and render us useful and acceptable to men. Give us Lord, such sense of thy wisdom, and of our own folly, as will make us think those circumstances best, that thou hast appointed for us, and the worst condition we can be in, much better than we deserve; that being entirely resigned to thy will, we may be content in whatsoever state, thou art pleased to place us in. Finally, we humbly beseech thee, not to suffer the temptations of intemperance to overcome us, nor our vicious appetites to ensnare us. But do thou, Lord, teach us sobriety and moderation, and so assist us with thy holy spirit, that amidst all the allurements to riot and excess, we may preserve our bodies pure and undefiled temples of the holy spirit, for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

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A Prayer for peace of mind.

O GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give, that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for acceptance with God.

O GOD, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers, and because through the weakness of our mortal natures, we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping thy commandments, we may please thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for grace to withstand the assaults of the devil, and to overcome the temptations of the world.

O LORD, we beseech thee, give us grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A general confession of sin.

ALMIGHTY God, father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men. We do acknowledge and desire to bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty; provoking most justly thy wrath, and indignation against us. We do sincerely repent,
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and desire to be heartily sorry for these our mis-doings, that the remembrance of them, may be grievous unto us, for the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, most merciful father, for thy son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O Lord we beseech thee, mercifully hear our prayers, and spare all those who confess their sins unto thee, that they whose consciences by sin are accused, by thy merciful pardon may be absolved, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A morning prayer for a Family:

O LORD God, that hearest prayers, and art nigh to all them that call upon thee in faith, having thine eye continually upon a world of creatures, that depend intirely upon thee. As we are moved by our own necessities, so we are encouraged by daily experience of thy mercy, to shelter ourselves under the shadow of thy wings, and to continue our supplications at thy awful throne. And we beg of thee, who fashionest all the hearts of the sons of men, that thou wilt prepare our souls to come into thy presence, to call upon thy blessed name in a due and acceptable manner. Pour down upon us the quickening energy of thy grace, and let thy good spirit help our infirmities, and teach us to ask such things as are most agreeable to thy will, and most advantageous to our precious and immortal souls. We who have taken upon us, to address the sovereign majesty of heaven and earth, are but sinful dust and ashes, who have but too just cause to be afraid, lest our manifold sins should provoke thee to hide thy face from us, to shut up thy loving kindness in displeasure, and to display thy wrath

wrath against us. For we have done foolishly and wickedly, in not hearkening to the calls of thy word, nor obeying the motions of thy blessed spirit. Our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our sins are become a heavy burden, too grievous and too weighty for us to bear ; they are infinite in number, and shouldest thou, O Lord, enter into judgment with us, we could not answer thee one of a thousand ; but we must lay our hands upon our mouths, and acknowledge ourselves guilty criminals ; and that all our dependance is upon thy mercy, and we can plead nothing in our own behalf. Be merciful to us, O God, miserable sinners, for his sake whom thou hast exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to thy people, and forgiveness of their sins. Be merciful to us we pray thee, and heal our souls that have grievously sinned against thee ; forgive our backslidings, and enable us to renew our repentance, to establish our goings in thy holy ways, that we may not be so wavering, and so inclinable to turn from our duty, after thou in mercy hast spoken peace to our souls, but that we may go on conquering, and to conquer, till all the enemies of our salvation, shall be intirely subdued under our feet. Thou God of all grace, bring such thoughts to our minds, and fix such considerations so powerfully in our hearts, as thou knowest most effectual, to prevail with us to do thy will, and keep us in the performance of our duty, till thou shalt receive us into the blessed kingdom of thy glory. And in the mean time, sanctify all thy dealings to us, and bless us in all our undertakings, make us humble in a high state, and contented in a low one, and duly careful of our souls in all ; following after such things now, as will bring us true peace and comfort at the last. Dispose of us we beseech thee, our God, and all that concerns us this day, to the glory of thy name.

name. Keep us at all times, and in all places, and companies, from the evil of sin, and from all other evils, to which our sins expose us. And take thou, gracious father, the guidance and government of us, and so lead us here in all our ways with thy counsel, that hereafter thou mayest receive us into thy glory, through thy tender mercy, and our Saviour's abundant love, in whose own words, we beg all things needful for ourselves and others. *Our Father, &c.*

An evening prayer for a family.

LORD, the great and glorious God, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, the maker and preserver, ruler and disposer of us, and of all the world, thou hast created all things by thy almighty hand, and ordered all that thou hast made, by thy wise and righteous providence, and thy mercy is everlasting, and over all thy works. Who is able to express, or to conceive, the exceeding riches of that grace and goodness, which thou, Lord, does so plentifully bestow upon sinful creatures, who deserve nothing from thee, but to be severely punished by thee. Lord, we have tasted this day of thy mercy, and lived altogether upon thy fatherly care and bounty; but notwithstanding all the repeated pledges of thy favour to us, we have greatly abused thy loving kindness. What unsuitable returns have we made for thy unspeakable mercies, and the innumerable blessings thou hast heaped upon us. We are amazed at the multitude of our sins, that we have committed against the light of thy gospel, and the inward motions of thy holy spirit, against all that patience and long forbearance, which thou Lord hast exercised towards us, and against the many methods and mercies which thou from time to time, hast made use of in order to reclaim us, and to turn us from our wicked courses. Lord,
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our provocations are so exceeding great, that we are afraid of thy heavy displeasure, and that the day of thy patience is at an end, and thou wilt give us no more of the grace which we have so shamefully abused, no more of the blessed spirit that we have so frequently resisted. Lord, we should have nothing to expect from thee, but judgment, were we not assured, that thy mercy rejoices over judgment, and that thou delightest not in the death of sinners, but rather they should turn to thee and live. Therefore thou leavest us these opportunities to appear before thee, to plead with our God, for the welfare of our immortal souls, that have reproachfully sinned against thee, and grievously violated thy righteous commands. And what have we to plead, blessed Lord, but thy gracious goodness, and merciful intentions, to save returning penitents, and to make them partakers of thy glory. Thou hast sent thy only son, to be our almighty Saviour; and he that did no sin, was manifested to take away our sins. For his sake be pleased to spare us, and forgive us our transgressions. Turn away thy wrath from us, graciously receive us to thy favour, and comfort us with a well-grounded assurance of thy mercy, and that our many and grievous offences are pardoned. And because such is the frailty of our natures, that without the aid of thy efficacious grace we cannot do any thing that is good. We pray thee, Lord, to help us with thy grace, and so to assist us with thy blessed spirit, that we may be fortified against all temptations, and be diligent and faithful in thy services. Be pleased, O God, to manifest thyself to our souls, and to make such discoveries of thy will to us, as will give us a right knowledge of thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Give us blessed Lord, such power from above, as will enable us to perform our duty acceptably, and to act according to that

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degree of light, which thou hast imparted to us, that we may no longer hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may walk as children of the light and of the day; may not only be almost, but altogether such as thou wouldst have us to be, then shall we have cause to give thee praise and glory to all eternity. Which thing we beg not only for ourselves, but for all who are with us partakers of the same common nature, especially for thy whole church, where-soever dispersed, or however distressed over the face of the earth; for our sovereign Lord King GEORGE, and all the Royal Family; for our rulers and counsellors, for our ministers and teachers, for our relations and neighbours, our friends and benefactors, and for all thy afflicted servants, whatsoever their trials or troubles may be. Supply all their wants, and fulfil all their desires, as is most agreeable to thy heavenly wisdom, and to thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Thou Lord art the great preserver of men, who hast blessed us this day, and provided for us all our days; make us thoroughly sensible of thy goodness, which we have so bountifully and so long experienced. Make us mindful of these inestimable obligations, and how greatly we are indebted to thee. Take care of us, O Lord, and be good to us this night; give us comfortable repose on our beds, and everlasting rest in our souls; and be thou our God and guide, our hope and help, our joy and comfort, and all in all to us this night, and for evermore.

The general thanksgiving.

ALMIGHTY God, father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks, for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all, for thine inestimable

inestimable love in the redemption of the world, by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee, in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

A Prayer for contrition.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts; that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for sanctification.

ALMIGHTY Lord and everlasting God, vouchsafe we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments, that through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and Soul, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Prayer very proper to be used at the conclusion of either morning or evening prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, who has promised to hear the petitions of them that ask in thy Son's name, we beseech thee, mercifully to incline thine ears to us, that have made now our prayers
and

and supplications unto thee; and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked, according to thy will, may effectually be obtained to the relief of our necessities, and to the setting forth thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all, evermore. *Amen.*

A midnight hymn. The words by a Lady.

- 1 **N**O more my soul, at disappointments grieve,
Can flowing tears my fate controul,
Or sighs my woes relieve.
Adversity is virtue's school,
To those that right discern;
Let me observe each painful rule,
And each hard lesson learn.
- 2 When winter's clouds obscure the sky,
And heav'n the earth deform;
If fix'd the strong foundations lie,
The castle braves the storm.
Thus fix'd on faith's unfailing rock,
Let me endure a while;
Misfortune's rude impetuous shock,
And glory in my toil.
- 3 Ill fortune cannot always last,
Oh, though it should remain;
Yet I each painful moment haste,
A better world to gain.
Where calamities no more shall wound,
Nor faithless friends destroy;
Where innocence and truth are crown'd,
With never fading joys.
- 4 Tumultuous days and restless nights,
The guilty ever knows;
A stranger to the calm delights,
Of study and repose.
Keep me from envy, care, and strife,
Guard me ye pow'rs divine;
And pleas'd when ye demand my life,
I may that life resign. 7 DE65

THE END.

